

Becoming a Community of Learners: Emerging Leadership Practices

The following questions will help you reflect on your leadership and practices in your school. This checklist has the benefits and limits of all checklists. While comprehensive, it cannot cover all of the special issues that make up the unique context of your school. This checklist that we offer is not provided with the intention of making you feel guilt or shame at what you're not doing. Rather we have designed this checklist to stimulate your thinking about what you are doing and what you might consider doing in the future. Thus, we view this checklist as a catalyst for flexible action, rather than as a straitjacket to make you conform to an image of the "good principal."

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Ways of Leading and Managing	always	frequently	sometimes	never
Have we worked together to articulate a shared purpose and educational vision focused on learning?				
Do leaders protect the vision and make it visible to others?				
Do leaders communicate their values and mission in the things they do, how they spend their time, and what they consider important?				
Do we take collective responsibility for school practices and outcomes ?				
Do leaders in our school emphasize power through people rather than power over people?				
Is authority in our school based more on professional knowledge and competence than on position and rules?				
Do leaders in our school facilitate, guide, and coach others to adopt practices that advance student performance? academic and social?				
Do leaders provide social support for high academic achievement?				
Do leaders communicate their passion for learning by challenging ineffective practices?				
Do leaders create a culture that supports risk-taking and encourages innovation?				

Approaches to Problem Solving and Decision Making	always	frequently	sometimes	never
Are discussion and inquiry common and accepted practices in our school?				
Do we share information and make decisions together?				
Do we solve problems collaboratively?				
Are we open to multiple approaches and solutions rather than reliance on single answers and past practices?				
Do leaders try to gain many points of view before solving important problems?				
Is decision making consensual and inclusive as opposed to top-down and nonparticipatory?				
Do leaders provide formal and informal means for staff and students to raise and solve problems in the school?				
Do leaders accept conflict as "normal" and use it as a stimulus for change, or is it viewed as "bad" and something simply to be controlled?				
Concerning Learning	always	frequently	sometimes	never
Are learning goals clear, understood, and accepted?				
Do leaders protect academic time and support teachers in keeping students engaged in learning?				
Do students acquire essential skills and knowledge at high levels?				
Do we engage students as active learners and co-constructors of knowledge?				
Do classroom practices develop thinking skills for all children rather than emphasize rote acquisition of basic skills?				
Do classroom practices provide opportunities to apply and use knowledge in a variety of contexts?				
Do we provide opportunities for students to direct and be responsible for their own learning?				
Do we use cooperative learning groups and other alternative methods rather than relying solely on independent work and competition?				
Are some learning experiences interdisciplinary?				
Do learning experiences in our school incorporate resources outside of the classroom?				

Do we use valid, multiple assessments to gauge student learning and progress?				
Is there time and support for professional development that improves curriculum, instruction, and student learning?				
Do leaders model life-long learning for others by sharing new learning, successes, and failures ?				
Structural Conditions	always	frequently	sometimes	never
Are roles in our school flexible and interdependent rather than rigid and hierarchical?				
Do teachers have considerable autonomy and discretion to plan curriculum and organize instruction within an overall framework?				
Do we use teams to plan and implement school improvement?				
Are there opportunities for dialogue and planning across teams, grades, and subjects?				
Is communication in our school open and fluid as opposed to regulated by traditional chains of command?				
Do we create small, "communal" arrangements that personalize learning and maximize student-teacher and student-student interaction?				
Do we create an environment that is safe, supportive, and conducive to learning?				
Relating to the Community	always	frequently	sometimes	never
Do we encourage widescale participation of stakeholders parents, community members, and students?				
Do we empower parents and community members to participate in decisions about our school?				
Do we forge partnerships with community organizations, agencies, and businesses to address the needs of children and families?				
Are we linking a variety of health and human services to our school?				
Are local businesses involved with our school?				

The tool was based on the following resources:

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